

# Desert War

Tactical Warfare in North Africa, 1940-43

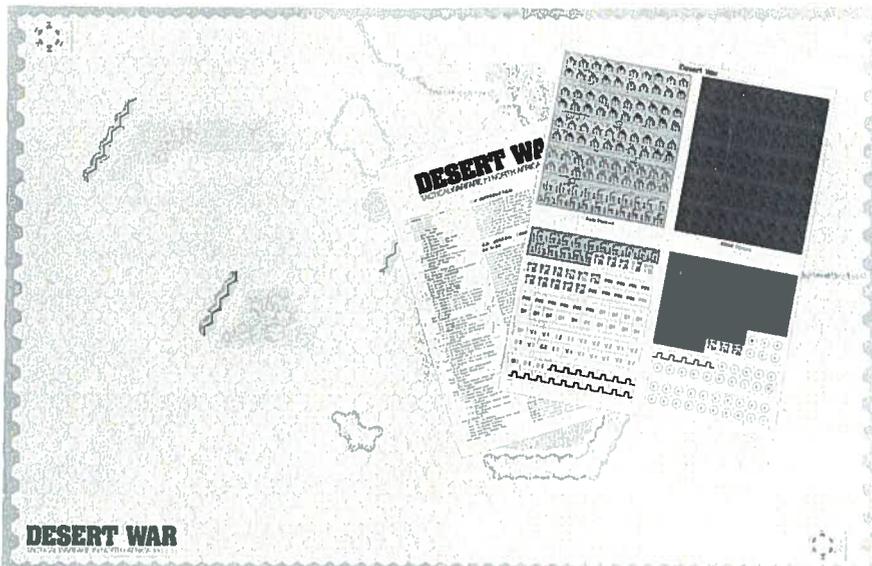
- Simultaneous armored combat
- Mines, entrenchments, off-map artillery
- Morale effects, panic

The Western Desert, stretching 1,400 miles between Tripoli and Alexandria, was described by one German general as "a tactician's paradise and a quartermaster's hell." Between March 1941, when Rommel's Afrika Korps arrived in Tripoli, and May 1943, when the last Axis troops surrendered in Tunisia, the conduct of the Desert War furnished the proof for that general's impression.

*Desert War* is a tactical simulation designed to recreate the mechanized struggles which took place in the "perfect" tactical terrain of North Africa during World War II. The 22" x 34" two-color mapsheet depicts a composite desert battlefield on which the flat sands are sparsely interrupted by patches of rocky cover or slight differences of elevation. Each mapsheet hex represents a hundred meters of distance and each Game-Turn represents three and a half minutes of actual time. Four hundred die-cut units represent the Allied, German and Italian combat units that contest the differing *Desert War* situations and scenarios. Opposing infantry companies, supported by tank platoons and anti-tank and artillery batteries engage each other within the tactical game scale of *Desert War*.

The innovative and popular game mechanics of *Combat Command* and *Red Star/White Star*, have been taken a step further in the direction of greater realism through the introduction of SPI's Simultaneous Movement System in the *Desert War* design — making it the first tactical armored wargame utilizing a playable system of simultaneous movement and combat. During each *Desert War* Game-Turn, each Player secretly plots in advance the movement or combat missions each of his units will perform. The use of SMS has finally attached an appropriate importance to the need to outguess, and be ready to counter, unexpected enemy tactics, and has further clarified the interrelation of fire and movement for tactical simulation purposes.

In *Desert War* combat is conducted by direct or indirect fire or by overrun. Four differing weapon classes (armor-piercing, high explosive, mixed weapons, and infantry weapons) employ different rules and Combat Results Table in their attacks. For direct fire and overrun attacks the need to compute odds has been eliminated and a "cleaner" system based on the attacker's Combat Superiority has been substituted. High explosive weapons, which unlike direct fire, are not subject to range attenuation, may be fired in either a tight or loose fire pattern. The chosen fire pattern affects both the size of the target area and the effect of fire in the target area. Another difference between high explosive attacks and other types of fire is the fact that high explosive blasts affect a target area



throughout both the Movement and Combat Phases whereas other fire attacks have effect solely in the combat phase. Another type of fire attack, indirect fire, must be plotted a Game-Turn in advance and its effect is applied during the following Game-Turn to any unit in or entering the secretly recorded target hexes. Finally, opportunity fire may be allocated to intercept enemy movement through Friendly fields of fire. The effect of most fire is a progressively damaging disruption result which accumulates against a unit until it is destroyed. This combat results system is a new idea — grafted from the concept of combat reduction but eliminating the bothersome process of continually substituting the actual unit counters on the mapsheet. The whole idea of *Desert War* was to design a game which would serve as the prototype for either a new series of tactical games or for the revamping of current favorites like *Red Star/White Star*.

Of course minefields play an important role in several *Desert War* scenarios. Minefields can be visibly deployed in a line clear across the map, or they may be deployed by groups secretly on the defending player's SMS chart (a pad of simple-to-use forms provided with the game). Units which attempt to leave a minefield are subjected to mineblasts (which are treated as a fixed superiority attack on the Direct Fire Combat Results Table).

There are four basic situations or scenarios to *Desert War*. After selecting a situation (either Meeting Engagement, Infantry Defense, Mine Belt, or Raid on Leager) the Player also choose a time period (early or late 1941, 1942, or early 1943) during which it is assumed that the situation is taking place. Various tank, anti-tank, and artillery

weapons are available for use according to the time period chosen to be played. Thus, the British may choose from eight different British and American tank types, while the Axis Player has a total of nine different tank and tank destroyer units from which he can compose an Assault Force. Each *Desert War* situation lasts sixteen Game-Turns. In the Meeting Engagement situation an Allied Attack Force confronts an Axis Mixed Assault Force and the victory is awarded to the Attacker (either the Allied or the Axis Force may be the Attacker in this situation) for exiting units from the map behind the Defender's line. Either Player may also be the Attacker in the Infantry Defense situation in which the Attacker's Tank Assault Force attempts to penetrate a particular section of the line held by the Infantry Defense Force before the Defender is reinforced with tank units. In the Mine Belt situation an Axis Anti-Tank and Minefield Defense Force has to prevent an Allied Attack Force from penetrating the mine belt and destroying a key German position. The "leager" in the Raid on Leager situation was a hastily prepared overnight defensive position. In this situation a German Mixed Assault Force attacks a British leager and victory is awarded for the destruction of enemy units. The choice of different situations, time periods and appropriate forces allow innumerable different *Desert War* scenarios to be created and played.

*Desert War* is a tactician's simulation tool. Those of you who have been following the development of this series from *PanzerBlitz* and *Combat Command* through *Red Star/White Star*, know that *Desert War* is a game you won't want to miss. *Desert War* is available (boxed) from Simulations Publications for \$7.00.